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ABSTRACT

Addressing the need for world geography classes to consider demography and other cultures, this paper presents a teaching unit to be included in seventh grade world geography courses. The primary focus of this unit is an individual project in which each student chooses a country and uses basic geographical skills and knowledge to analyze the relationship between that nation's people and their environment. The culminating activities of the unit are sessions in which students present their knowledge to the entire class. Before students begin their projects basic information about demography is presented and a possible sequence is suggested that covers population increase and its impact on technology, decision-making about fertility, and time allocated to work and leisure. A day-by-day schedule for topics is given as well as suggestions for helping students with their projects and for evaluating students. (IS)

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MINI-COURSE IN DEMOGRAPHY: WORLD EXPLORATIONS

by Janna Kosinsky

1985

Janna Kosinsky has taught social studies in Indianapolis and Crawfordsville and has been working on English certification. She is currently a program coordinator for the Indiana State Library developing an adult reading discussion program for 12 southern Indiana libraries.

Many seventh grade World Geography textbooks provide inadequate coverage of geographical terms and information about various areas of the world. Since World Geography is a survey course and the subject is too broad to be taught in any detail, there are significant gaps in any text program. Too little attention is given to culture, and virtually no information is provided about economic demography. Therefore, the individual classroom teacher must design lessons which will help students understand the relationship between these factors and various environments.

This paper presents a teaching unit to assist seventh grade World Geography teachers in helping their students learn more about other peoples in the world. It is designed to fuse the aims of World Geography with such factors as culture and demography.

The first six weeks of World Geography are usually spent explaining physical geography (outlining physical features, vegetation, climate, map reading, natural resources, etc.). The rest of the year is divided among various world regions. The unit should be introduced sometime prior to the first six weeks grading period and run concurrently with the general curriculum for the entire year.

The unit is designed to broaden student understanding of the world's environment. With a few simple instructions on economic demography and culture to enhance their previous geographical knowledge, students will be able to take a close-up look at a particular country and make connections between the environment and the people's behavior.

The primary focus of this unit is an individual project. Each student will choose a country and utilize basic geographical skills and knowledge to analyze the relationship between that nation's people and their environment. Students should identify physical features, climate, natural resources, agriculture, industry, and culture of the people of their chosen country as well as demonstrate how these characteristics influence the general population.

The culminating activity of the unit is a "share session" with each student presenting his/her country to the entire class. These share sessions may be scheduled at various intervals (1 or 2 a week) throughout the entire course, and may vary in length from a few minutes to the entire class period.

The students are evaluated according to how well they researched and presented their country. They should cover

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all of the factors mentioned above as well as present their country to the class in a creative and polished manner.

Hopefully, by participating in this activity, students will develop skills in researching information (reading *National Geographic*, travel ads, etc.) and find satisfaction in learning about other people.

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES

As a result of this activity, students should be able to:

(1) score 70% or better on a test of demographic terminology.
(2) draw a map of their country, including legends, important cities, rivers, mountains, landmarks, etc.
(3) write a report describing the relationship between the country and its environment.
(4) give an oral presentation to their fellow class members describing their country and including visual aids, demonstrations of clothing, food, etc.

DEVELOPMENTAL STRATEGIES

Since demography is rarely mentioned within the context of World Geography, some time should be spent providing students with some basic information regarding population before they begin their country explorations.

DAY 1:

— Provide basic information. Define demography (study of population).
— Discuss methods for collecting data (national census; registration of vital events such as births, marriages, deaths; survey data).
— Allow time for open discussion.

DAY 2:

— Explain a simple way in which population growth is measured:
Crude Birth Rate (CBR) + Crude Death Rate (CDR) = Rate of Natural Increase (RNI)

DAY 3:

— Obtain information from vital statistics records in your area and compute a local RNI (see box).

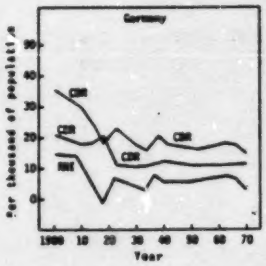
DAY 4:

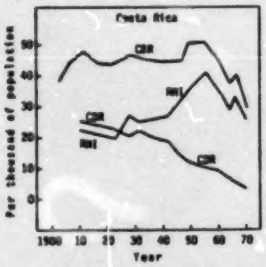
— Explain how an age pyramid is constructed (see box), and talk about the implications of such a structure.
  (a) Latin American structure (high fertility/low child mortality with people dying at regular intervals).
  (b) Western Europe structure (low fertility/low mortality—population is not growing or declining).
  (c) United States structure (baby boom/baby bust).
— Discuss briefly the effect that population has on the economy. (For example, baby boom has shaped direction of U.S. economy: 1960s overcrowded schools, 1970s surplus of educators, 1965-70 large numbers of youth played part in politics.)

DAY 5:

— Provide an explanation for the causes and consequences of population growth beginning with a simple Malthusian model.

Measuring Population Growth





Crude Birth Rate (CBR): $\frac{\text{total births in year}}{\text{mid-year total population}} \times 1{,}000$

Crude Death Rate (CDR): $\frac{\text{total deaths in year}}{\text{mid-year total population}} \times 1{,}000$

CBR - CDR = Rate of Natural Increase (RNI)

These figures are easily obtained from vital statistics, censuses, etc. They provide the best yearly estimates, but do not indicate much about migration. (Resource person: Elizabeth Hoffman, Associate Professor, Economics Department, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN.)

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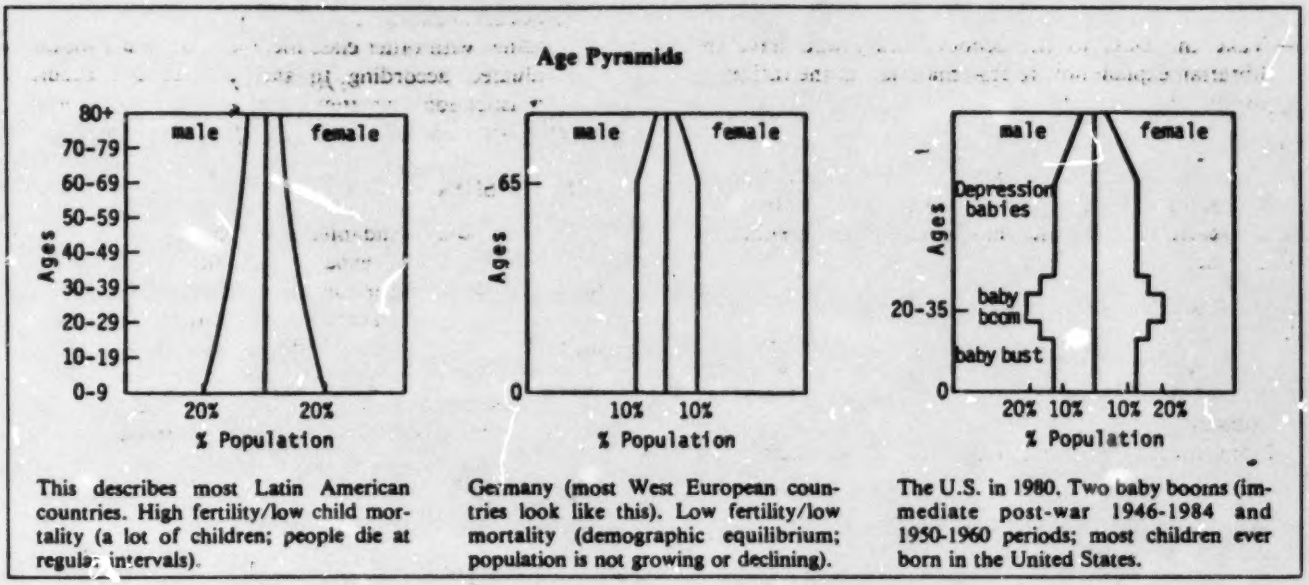

This describes most Latin American countries. High fertility/low child mortality (a lot of children; people die at regular intervals).

Germany (most West European countries look like this). Low fertility/low mortality (demographic equilibrium; population is not growing or declining).

The U.S. in 1980. Two baby booms (immediate post-war 1946-1984 and 1950-1960 periods; most children ever born in the United States.

— Provide a brief biography of Malthus (students at this age like that sort of information).
— Explain his concept that if real wages increase, people will have more children; more people mean competition over existing resources (causing food shortages, lower wages, high mortality); then the population will decrease and come back to some equilibrium point.

DAY 6:
— Explain the Boserup model (described below); point out that population growth speeds up the diffusion of already known technology and that a wide variety of technology has existed side by side. Explain the rank order of technologies starting with the least developed:
  (a) Slash and burn (forest fallow)—area of forest is cleared, burned out and then planted 1-5 years, then left to fallow 20-30 years/long enough for forest to grow up again. Still practiced in parts of Central Africa, it takes a lot of land.
  (b) Bush fallow (not long enough for forest to regenerate)—fallow 10-15 years. Medieval Europe practiced it.
  (c) Long fallow (transition to)—fallow every other year.
  (d) Two-field system—village divides land into two fields; alternate every other year.
  (e) Three-field system—fallow one year in three.
  (f) Annual cropping—no fallow.
  (g) Continuous cropping—more than one crop a year.
  (h) Multiple cropping—more than one crop at a time in alternate rows (common in tropical areas).
— Provide examples and pictures of each stage.

DAY 7:
— Introduce the model of fertility decision-making. (Because of the sensitive issues such as abortion and contraception discussed in this unit, some type of communication with the administration and/or parents of the students involved should be conducted. Some students may not be emotionally mature enough to deal with these concepts.) Point out the following about fertility decisions:
  (a) Early age at marriage will have higher fertility.
  (b) Late age at marriage will have lower fertility.
  (c) Income is directly related to the number of children born.
  (d) Factors that influence fertility are disease, sanitation, infanticide, abortion, social norms, contraceptives.

DAY 8:
— Explain the allocation of Time Theory (a very streamlined version of an economic principle). Point out the following ideas:
  (a) If you work, you trade leisure for consumption at a given wage.
  (b) A person with high market value of time is likely to have fewer children for any given time input per child; likely to use contraceptives more intensively (cost of contraception failure higher). This explains why poor people have more children, and more unwanted children than wealthier people.

DAY 9:
— Review preceding days' lessons and have students participate in review activities. Hangman and Jeopardy are games which might aid in the review.

DAY 10:
— Test over previous days' material on demography (see Sample Test in box).

END OF FIRST SIX WEEKS

DAY 1:
— Introduce the World Explorations project. Have students look at a map of the world. Discuss the seven continents. Explain the project to the students. Tell them to begin thinking about a country that they would like to know more about.

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DAY 2:

— Take the class to the school library and have the librarian explain how to find materials in the facility to use for their projects.

DAY 3:

— Have students sign a contract, stating which country they have decided to explore. Assign a presentation date for each student, and have them begin writing an outline.

DAYS 4 and 5:

— Give students a couple of days to work in the library to make sure they know how to use the card files and to let them see how much information is available on their country.

From this point, presentations can be scheduled at varying intervals throughout the rest of the semester/year.

EVALUATION

This activity can be evaluated in four ways:

1. Students should correctly complete 70% of the test questions after the mini-course on demography (see Sample Test).
2. Students should turn in a hand-drawn map of their country. Major features should be clearly and accurately located. Legends are a must.
3. Students should turn in a written report, identifying various physical features, climate, agriculture, industry, etc. of their country. Most importantly, an analysis of how these factors influence the people should be included.
4. Students should give an oral presentation, sharing their findings with other class members. Students should be evaluated according to their degree of: accuracy, sophistication, neatness, organization of thought, creativity, and effort.

CONCLUSION

This unit could be adapted, incorporated with other subjects, shortened, or expanded to fit the needs of the teacher, students or the curriculum. Flexibility is one of the keys to successful teaching, and elasticity is one of the many great components of this activity. Before this unit begins, teachers should rally the support of the administration and parents. This activity should proceed smoothly if people are informed in advance of its purpose.

Sample Test

Short Answer

1. What are three ways that population data is collected?
2. How is the rate of natural increase computed?
3. What effect has the baby boom had on the U.S. economy?
4. What is Malthus' model for the cause and consequences of population growth?
5. Where is our area agriculturally ranked according to Boserup?
6. What are some factors which influence fertility?
7. Why do poorer people tend to have more children than wealthier people?

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